

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard Baxter:

Now, reader, according to the directions already given, conscientiously practice meditation as well as prayer. Do it daily if possible. Retire into some private place at the most convenient time, and lay aside all worldly thoughts. With all possible seriousness and reverence look up towards heaven. Remember there is your everlasting rest. Study its excellency and reality. Rise from sense to faith by comparing heavenly with earthly joys. Then mix exclamations with your soliloquies, until, having pleaded the case reverently with God and seriously with your own heart, you have ignited yourself from dust to flame. It will change you from a forgetful sinner and lover of the world, to an ardent lover of God; from a fearful coward to a persistent Christian; from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life. In other words, this activity will wean your heart from earth to heaven; from crawling in earth's dust to walking with God.

As you meditate on your everlasting rest, here are some suggestions. Consider the significance of "rest." How sweet the sound. Rest! Not as the stone that rests on the earth. Not as this flesh shall rest in the grave. But that active rest, when we "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty!" (Rev. 4:8). When we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy. O blessed day, when I shall rest with God. My perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God; when God, who is Love itself, shall perfectly love me.

Consider how near that rest is. Though my Lord seems to delay His coming, yet a little while and He will be here. What are a few hundred years when they are over? I think I hear His trumpet sound. I think I see Him coming in the clouds, with His attending angels, in majesty and glory.

Now, blessed saints, that have believed and obeyed, this is the climax of faith and patience. This is it for which you prayed and waited. Are you now sorry for your sufferings and sorrows, your self-sacrifices and holy living? See how the Judge smiles on you; there is love in His looks, the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in His friendly, shining face. Listen! He calls you. He invites you to stand on His right hand. Fear not, for that is where He sets His sheep. O happy announcement, "Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). He takes you by the hand, the door is open, the kingdom is His and therefore yours; there is your place before His throne. The Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome. Ever so unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the purpose of free redeeming grace, the climax of eternal love. O blessed grace; O wonderful love! But I cannot express it. I cannot even imagine it.

This is that joy which was purchased by sorrow, that crown which was bought by the cross. My Lord wept, that now my tears might be wiped away. He bled, that I might now rejoice. He was forsaken, that I might have this fellowship. He then died, that I might now live. O free mercy, that can exalt so unworthy a sinner. Free to me, though costly to Christ!

This is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor this harmonious praise like the curses which we heard on earth. This body is not like what we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. Where are the old divisions, arguments, bad names, exasperated tempers, frowns, and uncharitable condemnations? Now we are all of one heart, home, and happiness. O sweet reconciliation! Now the Gospel shall no more be dishonored through our foolishness. No more, my soul, shall you mourn for suffering friends, nor weep over their graves. You shall never suffer your old temptations from Satan, the world, or your own flesh. Your pains and sickness are all cured. Your body shall no more burden you with weakness and weariness. Headaches and hunger, insomnia and exhaustion, all are gone. Blessed change! Farewell sin and sorrow forever. Good-bye my proud, unbelieving heart—my worldly, sensual, carnal mind; and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray; for this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55). The date of my lease will no more expire. When millions of ages are passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are passed, it is no nearer ending.

Ah, drowsy, earthly heart, how coldly do you think of this coming day. Would you rather sit down in dirt than walk in the palace of God? Is it better to be here, than above with God? Is the company better? Are the pleasures greater? Yonder is your Father's glory. Yonder, O my soul, must you go when you depart this body. When the power of your Lord raises your body and joins you to your new immortal body, yonder you will live with God forever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundation of pearl, the streets

and sidewalks of transparent gold.

O my soul, do you stagger at the promises of God through unbelief? (Romans 4:20). I highly suspect you. If you really believed, you would be more excited by it. Is it not under the signature and oath of God? Can God lie? Can He that is Truth itself be false? What need does God have to flatter or deceive you? Why should He promise you more than He will perform? Dare not to charge the wise, Almighty, faithful God with this! O wretched heart of unbelief, has God made you a promise of rest, and will you come short of it? Your eyes and ears and all your senses may prove delusions sooner than a promise of God could delude you. You may be more certain of that which is written in the Word, than if you saw it with your own eyes or felt it with your own hands.

As I cannot match the Lord in works of power, no more can I match Him in love. Lord, I surrender. I am completely overcome by your love. Your captive will gladly proclaim your victory. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach your immeasurable love? Though I cannot say that I love You as You love me, yet I can say, "Lord, You know that I want to love You. I am angry with my heart that it does not love You more."

My Lord has taught me to rejoice in hope of His glory, and even to see it through the present bars of a prison—[^]for, when "persecuted for righteousness' sake," He commands me to "rejoice, and be exceeding glad," because "my reward in heaven is great" (Matt. 5:10-12).

But your feast, my Lord, is nothing to me without an appetite. You have set the delicacies of heaven before me; but unfortunately, I am blind and cannot see them. I am sick and cannot relish them. I am so paralyzed that I cannot put forth a hand to take them. I therefore, humbly beg this grace, that as you have opened heaven to me in Your Word, so YOU would open my eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it. O Spirit of life, breathe your grace into me. Take me by the hand, and lift me from the earth, that may see what glory You have prepared for those who love You (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Can my tongue say that I shall shortly and surely live with God, and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it with faith, and not with joy? Ah, faith, how clearly do I now see your weakness. But though unbelief darkens my light, and dulls my life, and suppresses my joys; it shall not be able to conquer and destroy me. Can beautiful objects delight my eyes, or pleasant odors my smell, or melody my ears; and shall not the forethought of celestial bliss delight me? Lord, You have reserved my perfect joy for heaven. Help me to desire until I may possess, and let me long for it when I cannot, as I wish I could, rejoice in it.

Why do I so easily forget my resting place? O my soul, does the dullness of your desire after rest not accuse you of most detestable ingratitude and foolishness? Must your Lord purchase you a rest at so costly a price, and you not value it more? Must He go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and are you reluctant to go and possess it? Shall the Lord of glory desire your company, and you do not desire His? Must earth become a very hell to you before you are willing to be with God? If your successful efforts and godly friends seem better to you than a life with God, it is time for God to take them from you.

Ah, my dear Lord, though I cannot say, "My soul longs after you" (Psalm 84:2), yet I can say, "I long for such a longing heart." "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:4). My spirit cries, "Let 'your kingdom come' (Matt. 6:10), or let me come to Your kingdom;" but the flesh is afraid you might hear my prayer and take me at my word!

I am willing to stay here on earth while You will use me. Give me the work which You have for my hands. But when it is done, take me at my best. I don't want to be so impatient as to ask You to cut off my time and take me home before I am prepared, for I know my eternal reward depends so much on the use I make of this life. But neither would I stay here when my work is done. While I must be absent from You, let my soul as sincerely groan as my body does when it is sick.

O Savior, hasten the time of Your return. Let that joyful trumpet sound the signal for the great resurrection day, when your command shall go forth, and none disobey. Then the sea and the earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awaken, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. I can lay down my body in the dust, trusting it not to a grave, but to You, O Lord. Therefore shall my flesh rest in hope, until You raise it to everlasting rest.

O let "your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). Your homesick bride says, "Come!" for your Spirit within her says, "Come!" and teaches her thus to pray (Revelation 22:17). Yes, the whole creation says, "Come!" And You yourself have said, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).